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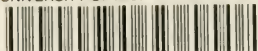
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THE RIGHT REV. JOHN STARK RAVENSCROFT, D.D.

BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE OF NORTH CAROLINA.

THE LIFE

OF

BISHOP RAVENSCROFT.

BY

JOHN N. NORTON, M. A.,

RECTOR OF ASCENSION CHURCH, FRANKFORT, KY.; AUTHOR OF "FULL
PROOF OF THE MINISTRY;" "ROCKFORD PARISH;" "LIFE OF
BISHOP WHITE," ETC.

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"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort  
with all long-suffering and doctrine."—*St. Paul's Charge to Timothy, the Bishop of  
Ephesus.*  
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TO
JOSIAH COLLINS, ESQ.,
OF
SOMERSET PLACE, SCUPPERNONG, NORTH CAROLINA,
AS A
Tribute of Respect
FOR
HIS DISTINGUISHED ABILITIES,
AND
FOR HIS DEVOTION TO THE CAUSE
OF
The Church.

“EVERY Christian may, and should be, ready, in matters of indifference, to sacrifice mere opinions on the altar of peace and good order, and to yield a prompt obedience to lawful ecclesiastical authority. Such principles lead to the maintenance of the Church in her integrity. They forbid us to attempt amalgamation with surrounding brethren, separate, alike, in doctrine, polity, and institutions. Such views and conduct are often stigmatized with opprobrious epithets. It is under such circumstances that a determined spirit of obedience to God, in all things, is required of us.”—BISHOP DE LANCEY'S *Sermon, published by request of the Wardens and Vestry of St. Luke's Church, Rochester, N. Y., 1844.*

P R E F A C E .

THE materials out of which the biographer must construct his work, are oftentimes much more scanty than would be generally supposed.

It is but seven-and-twenty years since Bishop Ravenscroft's decease, and yet, when the attempt is made (and that, too, with no little diligence and zeal) to discover his surviving friends, and to note down their remembrances of him, the task is found to be almost as difficult as in the case of Bishop Seabury, who has been dead for more than sixty years.

The truth is that we are living in a busy, bustling age, and one generation treads so closely upon the heels of the next, that the departed are too soon forgotten, and the benefit of their example, in many cases, is lost to the Church.

This consideration, among others, has prompted the writer to prosecute his task of preparing this series of biographies, with all the expedition which so serious an undertaking will permit him to use.

“STAND AS AN ANVIL, WHEN IT IS BEATEN UPON.”—

St. Ignatius to St. Polycarp : both Martyrs.

“Stand, like an anvil,” when the stroke
Of stalwart men falls fierce and fast ;
Storms but more deeply root the oak,
Whose brawny arms embrace the blast.

“Stand, like an anvil,” when the bar
Lies, red and glowing, on its breast ;
Duty shall be life’s leading star,
And conscious innocence, its rest.

“Stand, like an anvil,” when the sound
Of ponderous hammers pains the ear ;
Thine, but the still and stern rebound
Of the great heart that cannot fear.

BISHOP DOANE.

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L I F E
OF
BISHOP RAVENSCROFT.

Chapter First.

AN EXCEPTION TO A GENERAL RULE, AND YET A CASE WHICH ENDS LIKE ALL THE REST—BIRTH—PARENTAGE—REMOVAL TO EUROPE—THE AMERICAN BOY AT SCHOOL IN SCOTLAND—HIS FATHER'S DEATH—THE WIDOWED MOTHER AND HER ONLY SON—GOOD SEED NOT LOST—THE BIBLE IN SCHOOLS—A HIGHER SCHOOL IN ENGLAND—WHAT MRS. RAVENSCROFT NEVER DREAMED OF.

N most of the biographies of the Bishops of the Church which we have hitherto had the privilege to write, we have had occasion to notice the happy effects which have uniformly followed the faithful instruction of

parents. The life of Bishop Ravenscroft, while it is no exception to this rule, will yet be found quite different from the rest. It will serve to illustrate the fact, that although the good seed sown in childhood may lie for a long time dormant, and apparently dead, sooner or later, by God's grace, it will again appear, and bring forth fruit unto holiness.

JOHN STARK RAVENSCROFT was born in the year 1772, at an estate near Blandford, Prince George's County, Virginia, which had long been in the possession of his family. He was the only child of Dr. John Ravenscroft, a gentleman of fortune, who had been educated for a physician. The Bishop's mother was the daughter of Mr. Hugh Miller, a native of Scotland, who resided in the same county.

Dr. Ravenscroft's ample fortune and small family soon induced him to abandon his laborious profession, and within two months

after the birth of his son he crossed the ocean, and spent a couple of years in the north of England. He finally settled, however, in the south of Scotland.

It is not known, certainly, why Dr. Ravenscroft removed to Europe. Although many persons fled thither, as the stormy days of the American Revolution approached, it is unlikely that the troubles between the colonies and the mother country had any influence in this particular case. Great excitement had prevailed before, but the year 1772, and the early part of the following one, was a season of remarkable tranquillity—so much so, indeed, that the opinion was generally entertained that the wiser and more righteous policy which the British government had begun to pursue, would be the means of preventing all further difficulties with the colonies.

Whatever Dr. Ravenscroft's motives may have been for leaving America, it was

plainly his intention to return no more, as arrangements were made for the sale of his landed estates and other valuable property.

This business was all arranged to his satisfaction, but in consequence of the unsettled state of the country during the war, the payments were not promptly met, and he was in consequence somewhat embarrassed during the rest of his life, although he left his widow in easy circumstances. He died towards the close of 1780.

And now only two actors are left upon the stage, the widowed mother and her son, a promising boy, eight years of age.

The earliest recollections of Bishop Ravenscroft were associated with Scotland—its clouds and mists, and its rugged and picturesque scenery. His mother was a strong-minded, intelligent woman, and she felt that the best part which she could do for her son was to give him the advantages of a

thorough education. The schools of Scotland were celebrated for affording peculiar facilities to the student, and the little American boy, thus early transplanted from his native soil, made good use of his opportunities.

Speaking of these early days, in a fragment of an autobiography, which, it is much to be regretted, was not made more complete, the Bishop remarks: "Here I received the rudiments of my education, and I feel bound to record that I owe much to the custom there established of making the Scriptures a school-book—a custom, I am grieved to say it, not only abandoned in the schools and academies among us, but denounced as improper, if not injurious. Although I was unconscious, at the time, of any power or influence over my thoughts or actions thence derived, yet what mere memory retained of their life-giving truths, proved of unspeakable advantage when I became awakened to the subject of

religion; and I am constrained to believe, that what was thus unconsciously sown in my heart, though smothered and choked by the levity of youth, and abused and perverted by the negligence and sinfulness of my riper years, was, nevertheless, a preparation of Heaven's foresight and mercy, for grace to quicken me—a mighty help to my amazed and confounded soul, when brought to a just view of my actual condition as a sinner, both by nature and by practice. Without this help I might, like thousands of others, have wandered in a bewildered state, the prey of many delusions, engendered by the anxieties of a disturbed and ignorant mind, or by the fanaticism of those many well-meaning, perhaps, but certainly most ignorant men, who yet venture to become teachers of religion. For this reason it is that I have been earnest, during my ministry, in pressing upon parents, and upon those who have the care of youth, the great

duty of furnishing their tender and pliant minds with the treasures of divine knowledge and saving truth, contained in God's revealed Word."*

It is certainly taking a long step backward to leave the Bishop, in the maturity of his gigantic mind, and to return to the little American school-boy in Scotland; but so the course of the story leads.

When her son had finished his course at the Grammar school where he had first been placed, Mrs. Ravenscroft sent him to a seminary of somewhat higher grade in the north of England. Here, besides continuing his classical studies, he was instructed in Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, and other sciences. The mother could have had no idea how these treasures of knowledge would afterwards be used. Little did she think that this darling child—now growing up at


* Bishop Ravenscroft's Works, Vol. I., p. 8, etc.

such a distance from his native land—would again go back, and there become, in after life, one of the boldest leaders in the warfare of the Church of God against the mighty power of Satan and his hosts!



Chapter Second.

UNSETTLED ESTATES—YOUNG RAVENSCROFT RETURNS TO VIRGINIA—1789—STATE OF THE COUNTRY AT THAT TIME—THE CHURCH AWAKING AFTER LONG SLUMBER—SUCCESS IN RECOVERING PROPERTY—PLANS FOR STUDYING LAW—WILLIAM AND MARY COLLEGE—DR. MADISON, PRESIDENT AND BISHOP—UNRESTRAINED LICENSE OF YOUTH—WORSE AND WORSE—FULFILLING THE DESIRES OF THE FLESH AND OF THE MIND.

AD Dr. Ravenscroft been able to make a satisfactory settlement of his affairs on leaving Virginia, it seems more than likely that his son would never have returned to this country. A young man of fortune might have found enough to occupy his attention among the refinements and pleasures of European society. But the all-wise Dis-

poser of human events had other purposes in view.

Soon after Mr. Ravenscroft had entered upon his seventeenth year, his friends thought it advisable that he should return to Virginia, and endeavor to recover the portion of his father's estate which had so long been lost to his family. Accordingly, bidding farewell to all that he had ever known or loved, he left Scotland in the beginning of the winter of 1788, and reached Virginia on New Year's day, 1789, a stranger to all around him, and in great part his own master.

No young man could possibly have been placed in circumstances of greater peril. With no intimate friends to watch over and advise him, and with means at command for the gratification of every desire, it would not have been strange if he had become the victim of irresistible temptations, and been led on blindfold to ruin.

The period when Mr. Ravenscroft landed in America was a most eventful one in the history of this country. 1789 was the year when GEORGE WASHINGTON entered upon his duties as the first President of the United States, and the federal constitution was adopted.

The earliest permanent settlement of the whites had just been made within the limits of the present State of Ohio; and Tennessee, which had belonged to North Carolina, was ceded to the general government. The cotton-seed, planted two years before in South Carolina, had begun to give evidences of what might be expected in future from the cultivation of this profitable crop; and a steamboat (well-named the *Perseverance*) had just commenced her regular trips upon the river Delaware, running eight miles an hour.

Old-fashioned manners and customs still prevailed in Virginia; and a stranger from abroad, as he shared in the generous and refined hospitalities of the "Old Dominion,"

might readily have imagined himself a guest at the mansion of some English lord.

The Church, which, before the Revolutionary war, had been so strong in Virginia, was now well-nigh extinct. It is true, Bishop Seabury had been laboring in Connecticut for four years past, and Bishop White in Pennsylvania, and Bishop Provoost in New York, during half that period, to rouse the sinking energies of the few Churchmen who were left, but little did Mr. Ravenscroft suspect that *he* would ever feel an interest in such a cause, and even share in their labors!

He was so successful in recovering the wrecks of his father's property that he soon became master of an ample fortune. By the advice of his friends he now turned his attention to law, as presenting the fairest field of honor and emolument, and he accordingly entered William and Mary College, at Williamsburg, Virginia, with a view to the prosecution of that study, and to the acquisition

of a more thorough acquaintance with the sciences. The lectures of the celebrated Professor Wythe were the chief attraction which determined him to seek the benefits of this institution.

William and Mary College dates back its history from the year 1692, and the list of its presidents and professors includes the names of many who have rendered themselves distinguished, while the graduates compare favorably with those of any institution in the land.*

When Mr. Ravenscroft went to Williamsburg, Dr. Madison (who was consecrated the first Bishop of Virginia, in 1790) was at the head of the College, which position he occupied until his death in 1812.

The plan recommended by the young man's friends, that he should attend a course of law lectures, was, no doubt, a good one,

* For a brief history of the College, see Duyckinck's Cyclopædia of American Literature, Vol. I., p. 82.

and might have been of the utmost advantage to him in after-life ; but the time which he spent at William and Mary was, to a great extent, worse than thrown away. The professors in the several departments were able men, and the regulations of the College were judicious in themselves ; but they were not very rigidly enforced, and the consequence was that the students indulged in habits of extravagance and dissipation to an alarming degree. Separated by the wide Atlantic from the good mother who had watched over his infancy and boyhood, and supplied by a too indulgent guardian with almost unlimited means of gratifying his inclinations, Mr. Ravenscroft, though but seventeen years of age, did not fall far behind his companions in their irregularities and excesses.

His own straightforward confession will best disclose the true state of the case. “Except at the hours appropriated to the lectures,

my time was at my own disposal ; and though expected to attend prayers every morning in the College chapel, absence was not strictly noticed, and very slight excuses were admitted. Attendance at church on Sunday was entirely optional, and the great subject of religion wholly unattended to.*

The students were required to board in College ; but from the small number—not exceeding fifteen—from the low price of board, and the constant altercations with the steward—the public table was given up, and the students were permitted to board in the taverns, or elsewhere, as suited them. This every way injurious and most unwise permission presented facilities for dissipation which would not otherwise have been found ; and encouraged, as they were, by the readi-

* When young William Meade (now the beloved Bishop of Virginia) was going to church, on Sunday morning, to be admitted to Deacon's orders by Bishop Madison, the students of the College were seen with their dogs and guns, setting out on a hunt !

ness with which credit was obtained from persons whose calculations were formed on the heedlessness and improvidence of youth, temptation was divested of all present impediment to its power.”



Chapter Third.

LITTLE PROGRESS MADE AT COLLEGE—TURNING OVER A NEW LEAF—MR. BURWELL'S DAUGHTER—THE INFLUENCE WHICH SHE WAS ONE DAY TO POSSESS—VISIT TO SCOTLAND—FAREWELL TO MOTHER AND FRIENDS—SETTLEMENT FOR LIFE—A GOOD WIFE—EIGHTEEN YEARS WITHOUT GOD IN THE WORLD—KIND AND AMIABLE TRAITS—MORALITY, NOT RELIGION—ONE THING LACKING—THE FIRE GOING OUT ON THE ALTAR—THE BLIND LEADING THE BLIND—GOD'S LONG-SUFFERING MERCY.

HOUNG Ravenscroft remained, for some time, a member of William and Mary College; but from the painful picture presented in the last chapter, no one can be surprised to learn that he made little progress with his legal studies—and it does not appear that he ever was admitted to the bar.

Before leaving Williamsburg, however, an

event took place which was to be the means, in God's hands, of arresting him in his career of youthful dissipation, and of bringing him back into safer paths. He here became acquainted with a daughter of Lewis Burwell, of Mecklenburg County, who afterwards became his wife. She is represented as having been a most lovely and accomplished person, and one who exercised a very beneficial influence over his wayward disposition. Her gentle temper was peculiarly adapted to a collision with his impulsive and ardent spirit; and she possessed, at the same time, a firmness of character and correctness of principle which, while it enabled her to mould his less established character, preserved her from the influence of his evil example.

About the year 1792, Mr. Ravenscroft revisited Scotland for the last time, with a view of disposing of his property there, and making a permanent settlement in Virginia. It must have been a sad parting with his wid-

owed mother, but she preferred to remain in the land of her fathers, where she lived in great comfort with her two sisters. She could not withhold her consent, however, to the return of her son to that new and rising republic, where interest and inclination both seemed to lead him.

At the age of twenty-one, Mr. Ravenscroft was married to Miss Burwell, and having abandoned all idea of prosecuting the profession of law, he purchased a handsome estate, near his father-in-law, in the healthy county of Lunenburg, intending to devote the remainder of his life to agricultural pursuits.

“Thus removed [he remarks, in the fragment of his autobiography already referred to] from the temptations and facilities to vice, which our cities and towns present so readily, with regular and pleasant occupation on my farm, and my domestic happiness studied and promoted by the affectionate partner of

my life, my years rolled on as happily—were the present life alone to be provided for—as could reasonably be desired. The personal regard I entertained for my wife increased to the highest esteem, and even veneration, as the virtues of her character opened upon me; while the prudence and discretion of her conduct won me gradually from my previous dissipated habits.”*

Thus, for eighteen years, Mr. Ravenscroft continued to live—a devoted husband, a kind master, and a good neighbor, and universally respected by all who knew him. Having never been blessed with any children of his own, he acted the part of a father towards five orphans, who were placed under his care while infants, and no parent could have discharged his duties more conscientiously and faithfully.

But although many a deluded moralist

* Bishop Ravenscroft's Works, Vol. I., p. 12.

may have built his hopes of salvation upon a foundation more slender than that which Mr. Ravenscroft could have claimed for himself, it must be confessed that during all these years he was living without God in the world, and leaned only unto his own understanding. With no serious thought of religion, his Bible unread, prayer neglected, and every means of grace despised, how wretched was his lot, even while thus surrounded with all which could minister to the comfort of the body or pamper worldly pride! So great, indeed, was his contempt for even the outward forms of religion, that for eighteen years he was not present at any place of public worship more than six or seven times, and then not from choice, but from some accidental circumstance, which seemed to require him, as an act of politeness, to attend. He interested himself, with his accustomed zeal, in the politics of the day, but found too much satisfaction in the bosom of the family to

allow ambitious feelings to draw him away after the pursuit of those official stations which he was so well qualified to fill.

With all his wealth, and the comforts of his home, Mr. Ravenscroft felt that *something* was wanting to complete his happiness—the world was empty and unsatisfying, and still he had no hope beyond.

Had the Church in Virginia then possessed that life and vigor for which she is now distinguished, he might have been earlier attracted by “the beauty of holiness” to seek the service of God. But, alas! the fire had well-nigh burned out upon her altars, and her children, as sheep having no shepherds, were everywhere scattered abroad. Mr. Ravenscroft possessed too refined and well-cultivated a mind to be favorably impressed by those ruder forms in which religion was presented to his sight. “I soon found (he says) that I knew more of the Scriptures from memory than the preachers, and was


vain enough to think that I understood them better, and could apply them more correctly, than the well-meaning, perhaps, but certainly most ignorant, unqualified, and, of course, injurious men, who appeared around in the character of ministers of religion. But as I had no spiritual senses as yet quickened in me, the preaching of the Cross, even from an angel, would have been to me as to the Greeks of old—foolishness.

“Oh, what a miracle of long-suffering, that in all this time God was not provoked to cut me off! What a miracle of grace that I am permitted to think and speak of it, and to adore the riches of His mercy, in bringing me to a better mind!”



Chapter Fourth.

FOOLISH AND FALSE—TRUE STATEMENT OF THE CASE—TURNING FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT—1810, A MEMORABLE YEAR—SOLEMN REFLECTIONS—THE RESOLUTIONS OF THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS—MORTIFYING FAILURES—THE BIBLE READ ONCE MORE—RENEWED STRUGGLES TO DO RIGHT—HUMAN STRENGTH AGAIN GIVES WAY—CONVINCED OF SIN—PRAYERS AND TEARS—DAWNINGS OF HOPE—WHAT CHILDREN MAY LEARN FROM THE NARRATIVE.

 S many false and foolish stories were circulated, respecting the causes and manner of that marvellous change in Mr. Ravenscroft, by which *he put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, and put on the new man, which, after God is created in righteousness and true holiness, he was persuaded by his friends, towards the close of*

life, to draw up a statement himself. I should consider it presumptuous in me to attempt to give this narrative in words other than his own :

“It was in the year 1810 that it pleased God to set my mind at work, and gradually to bring me to doubt the dark security of my unawakened state. But I am not conscious of any peculiar incident or circumstance that first led me to considerations of this kind.

“As I was the manager of my own estate, which comprised a set of mills, as well as a plantation, about two miles distant from each other, I was, of course, much alone—at least in that kind of solitude which gives the mind opportunity to commune with itself. It was in my rides from one to the other, and while superintending the labors of my people, that a train of thought, to which I was previously altogether unaccustomed, began to occupy my attention, and though dismissed once and again, would still return, and with every

return would interest me more and more. That the train of thought thus suggested concerned my condition as an accountable creature will be readily imagined, as, also, that on the review I found it bad enough. This it was no difficult thing for me to feel and to admit, nor as yet did there appear much difficulty in reforming what I could not justify.

“An impatient and passionate temper, with a most sinful and hateful habit of profane swearing, in which I was a great proficient, were my most open and besetting sins. These, however, I considered as within my own control, and as such, set forthwith about amending them; but without any reliance upon God for help, or without much, if any, impression that it was at all needful. In this endeavor at reformation, which it pleased God thus to permit me to make, I went on prosperously for a season, and began to pride myself in that self-command I seemed to possess. But my own weakness was

yet to be showed me, and when temptation again assailed me, all my boasted self-command was but as a rush against the wall. I surrendered to passion, and from passion to blasphemy. When I came to reflect upon this, then it was that, for the first time in my life, I was sensible of something like concern—some consciousness of wrong beyond what was apparent. But without waiting to examine further I hastily concluded to exert myself more heartily, and yet to command myself thoroughly.

“During these my endeavors, however, the Scriptures were more and more the object of my attention, and from them I began gradually to discover (what I was very loath to admit) the true state and condition of human nature. What little I had lately come to know of myself, however, and all that I knew of the world, seemed to rise up as strong proofs that the doctrine of our natural depravity was true.

“Willing to escape from it, I resorted to the subterfuge of too many among us—that what we find in the Scriptures is *figuratively* expressed, and is, therefore, not to be taken in the strictness of the letter. But my own experience was to be the expositor of the Word. Again and again were my self-righteous endeavors foiled and defeated, much as at the first, and humbled and confounded, I became alarmed at what must be the issue—if I was thus to remain the sport of passions I could not command—the prey of sin I could not conquer. Something like prayer would flow from my lips, but it was the prayer of a heart that yet knew not aright its own plague. One more effort was to be made, and with great circumspection did I watch over myself for some weeks. Still did I continue, however, my search in and meditation upon the Scriptures; and here it was that I found the benefit of my early acquaintance with them. I had not to

look afar off for their doctrines, they were familiar to my memory from a child. I had known them thus far, though now it was that their living proof was to be experienced. The whole, I believe, was to be made to depend on my acquiescence in the turning point of all religion—that we are lost and undone, spiritually dead and helpless in ourselves—and so I found it.

“Again, and dreadfully, did I fall from my own steadfastness—temptation, like *a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine*, swept my strength before it, carried away my resolutions as Sampson did the gates of Gaza.

“I returned to the house convinced of my own helplessness, of my native depravity, and that to spiritual things I was incompetent. I now found of a truth that *in me dwelt no good thing*. I threw myself upon my bed in my private room—I wept—I prayed. Then was showed to me my folly

in trusting to an arm of flesh. Then did it please the Lord to point my bewildered view to HIM who is *the* LORD *our righteousness*. Then was I enabled in another strength to commit myself unto His way. From that moment my besetting sin of profane swearing was overcome, and to this moment has troubled me no more. But much was yet to be done, which the same gracious FRIEND of poor sinners continued to supply, and to lead me, step by step, to proclaim His saving name, and declare His mighty power openly to the world."

Thus much for this interesting narrative. There are many things which even children may learn from it. That time is well spent in which they are employed in learning by heart passages of the Holy Scriptures, to be recited to their parents at home, or to their teachers at Sunday School. These sacred treasures will profit them in after-life. Mr. Ravenscroft's history shows, also, how wretch-


ed every child of Adam must be, until he has made the Lord Jesus Christ his Friend. We are reminded, too, that without the help of God's grace we need not hope to be able to do right. How true are those words of the Hymn :

God will support our hearts
With might before unknown ;
The work to be perform'd is ours,
The strength is all His own.



Chapter Fifth

OPEN CONFESSION OF CHRIST—SAD CONDITION OF THE CHURCH—REJOICINGS OF THE ENEMY—REPUBLICAN METHODISTS—THE HUSBAND AND WIFE RECEIVED INTO COMMUNION—THE EVENTS OF THREE YEARS—WHAT CONSCIENCE SUGGESTED—OBSTACLES—THE DECISION OF A BRAVE MIND—ANOTHER DIFFICULT QUESTION—THE ORIGIN OF MINISTERIAL AUTHORITY—THE STUDY OF GOD'S ORACLES MAKING HIM WISER THAN HIS TEACHERS—CANDIDATE FOR HOLY ORDERS—LAY READING—HARSH JUDGMENT—DEATH OF HIS WIFE—“SUCH A SAVIOUR!”

 R. RAVENSCROFT had thus been led, by God's good Spirit, to renounce all dependence on his own unaided efforts, and to look to an Almighty arm to guide his feet into the ways of truth and peace.

He was too well read in the Bible not to

know that a public confession of Christ before the world was required of him, and he began to think of uniting himself with the Church. Alas! how much perplexity of mind he might have been spared, if the Apostolic Church of God, a branch of which had been planted in Virginia, had only been true to herself, and had now been able to set up her banners for tokens to those who were seeking for the true Ark of the Covenant! But such was not the case. The Episcopal Church was at its lowest ebb. The little effort which Bishop Madison had been disposed to make at the beginning of his Episcopate had given place to hopeless despair. The enemies of Zion looked upon her as dead. But had they forgotten the promises of God to His Church?

In making a public confession of his Saviour, Mr. Ravenscroft, having never turned his attention to the questions of Church government and ministerial authority, merely

looked about among the divers and discordant sects which overran the land, and chose a society called *Republican Methodists*, as being the most unexceptionable. He says that he was influenced, in this matter, by personal friendship for one of their preachers, Mr. John Robinson, of Charlotte County.

The *Republican Methodists* had a station, for preaching, eight miles from Mr. Ravenscroft's plantation, and here he and his wife were admitted to membership, according to the forms of that body. The new convert was so zealous in the cause, that on those Sundays when no preacher was present, he conducted public worship himself, and read a printed sermon for the benefit of the congregation.

Three years thus passed away, and Mr. Ravenscroft began to reflect whether it might not be his duty, in a country so destitute of religious privileges, to devote him-

self exclusively to the ministry. Conscience seemed to urge him to take this important step, while self-interest, and the dread of exciting the ridicule of his neighbors, kept him, for a season, in an unsettled state.

He was too independent and bold a man, however, to be influenced long by considerations of this nature, and soon the determination was formed to enter upon the work.

But now the question occurred to his mind, where was he to look for authority to act as an ambassador for the Most High?

He read, and studied, and consulted with preachers of various denominations on the subject, and at last he became firmly convinced that "the awful deposite of the Word, by which we shall all be judged, could never be thrown out into the world to be scrambled for, and picked up by whosoever pleased to take hold of it."

His old friends, the *Republican Methodists*, being merely a voluntary society of

men and women, banded together for a good object, indeed, but with no authority from God to establish a church, could not supply what his reason and conscience obliged him to seek after. He accordingly asked for a letter of dismissal from their communion, which being reluctantly granted, they parted as kind and affectionate neighbors.

Mr. Ravenscroft now turned his attention to the other religious bodies about him, but found none which could show a valid commission for its ministers, except that branch of Christ's Church known in this country as the Protestant Episcopal. He hastened to Richmond, and laid his credential as to character and standing before good Bishop Moore, and was received by him as a candidate for holy orders. This took place in February, 1816. He was now required to pass one year in study, before he could be ordained Deacon ; but during this period he

made himself useful as a lay-reader in the parishes of Cumberland, Lunenburg County, and St. James, Mecklenburg.

The whole history of Mr. Ravenscroft's coming into the Episcopal Church is a remarkable one. There were no family associations to turn his mind that way, and he had no intimate friend to exert an influence over him, or place books in his hands from which information could be gained. His interest and his inclination led him in other directions. But the prayerful study of the Bible, and that alone, brought him to the conclusion that the Episcopal Church was that which was founded by Christ and His Apostles in the beginning, and which was to last always, even unto the end of the world.

Those who have been disposed to judge harshly of Bishop Ravenscroft, because he so strenuously supported these views through all his after-life, should remember the pecu-

liar circumstances which brought him into the Church, and consider what very strong reasons he had for believing himself to be in the right.

“Had he been trained up from a child to love and venerate the Church, or had he been led by the mere force of education or expediency to become a member and a minister of it, it is possible that his feelings in relation to it might have been somewhat different from what they were.”*

Before Mr. Ravenscroft's mind had been thoroughly made up on the question of Church government, he was called to bear a heavy loss, in the death of his beloved wife. This occurred in 1814. She had been baptized in the Church in tender infancy, and had adorned the doctrine of God our Saviour by her consistent life, and had the satisfaction of seeing her husband, once so


* Bishop Ravenscroft's Works, Vol. I., p. 21.

hardened in his sins, a devout servant of Christ. As he watched by her dying bed, she would oftentimes exclaim: “Oh, how good it is to have a Saviour, and *such* a Saviour!”



Chapter Sixth.

ORDINATION — CALL TO MECKLENBURG — A VIGOROUS LABORER OF FORTY-FIVE—NO SIAM COMMISSION—ALLOWANCES WHICH SHOULD BE MADE—SMALL BEGINNINGS—THE OFFENCE OF A FAITHFUL GOSPEL—PECULIAR MANNER—“AM I THE ONLY PERSON PRESENT WHO BELIEVES IN GOD?”—MARK HIS TRACK IN THE SNOW—SUCCESS—NEW CHURCH—BISHOP MOORE’S REPORT—WELL DESERVED HONOR—DR. WILMER’S KIND CONGRATULATIONS.

 R. RAVENSCROFT was ordained Deacon, by Bishop Moore, in the Monumental Church, Richmond, April 25, 1817, and at once accepted an urgent invitation to become the minister of St. James’ Parish, Mecklenburg County, where he had done much good service as a lay-reader.

The clergy in Virginia were now too few, and too widely scattered, to make it expedi-

ent for a laborer to go forth without his full commission—and accordingly on the 6th of May, in the same year, he was ordained Priest, in the church at Fredericksburg, during the session of the Convention in that place.

Mr. Ravenscroft was no youthful stripling, putting on his armor early in life, and looking forward to long years of toil; but a man of five-and-forty years, who felt that too much time had already been wasted, and that he must use all diligence, before his days of usefulness should end. “On returning to my parish,” he remarks, in the closing sentence of his narrative, “deeply impressed with the awful commission intrusted to me, and with the laborious task of rescuing from inveterate prejudice the doctrines, discipline, and worship of the Church,* and of reviving among the people

* A picture of the forlorn condition of the Church in Virginia will be found in the Life of Bishop Moore, a former volume of this series.

that regard for it to which it was truly entitled, I commenced my ministerial labors, as the only real business I now had in life, relying on God's mercy and goodness, through the LORD JESUS CHRIST, for fruit to His praise."

We have had occasion to notice before the very decided views which Mr. Ravenscroft held with reference to the claims of the Church, at whose altars he was now commissioned to act as a minister.

No one could doubt his perfect sincerity, and those who differed from him as to the propriety of bringing forward such subjects so often in the pulpit, were obliged to honor him for his masterly abilities, his glowing zeal, and his uncompromising consistency.

When he began his labors as a lay-reader, the Prayer Book was almost unknown in the neighborhood where he officiated; but in the course of fifteen months afterwards he had a large and attentive congregation, and a commodious church was built.

“To some, however, his preaching was very offensive, and brought upon him that reproach to which the faithful minister of Christ has been liable in every period of the world.

“To the rich and worldly-minded, especially, to whom he had been so long allied in feeling and in practice, he now addressed his most heart-searching appeals, and familiar as he was with all their shifts and evasions, he exposed them to themselves with a fidelity and truth of coloring which they could not tolerate. Preaching of this kind, which they knew not how to resist, they affected to despise, and this faithful minister, though never deterred for a moment from revealing the whole of God’s will, was much and often grieved at the deadness and coldness of this class of his hearers.”

Mr. Ravenscroft had a manner peculiar to himself, and the effect of some of his remarks, made upon the spur of the moment, was

actually startling. On a certain occasion, while reciting the Apostles' Creed, in the public service, finding himself almost alone, his voice being unsustained by the congregation, he stopped short and exclaimed, with emphatic earnestness, "Is it possible that I am the only person present who believes in God, the Father Almighty?" The rebuke was felt to be well-deserved, and at once, with united voice, priest and people began the simple formulary of the faith, "*I believe in God,*" etc. No further advice as to the duty of responding aloud was needed for a long time to come.

Another characteristic anecdote is told of him, showing the spirit of self-sacrifice which distinguished the whole course of his ministry. When the weather was so inclement that he would not permit the colored servant, who acted as sexton, to accompany him to church, he would take the keys and ride off five or ten miles by himself, without the

smallest expectation of finding one individual on the ground to attend service. And then he would deliberately ride around the church and leave his track in the snow, as a testimony against the fair-weather Christians whom the unpleasant day had kept at home.

Some may consider this as an unnecessary exposure of his own health, but the reason which he gives is one which has great weight. "If," remarked he, my people could say, with any sort of plausibility, the weather is bad to-day, and Mr. Ravenscroft will not turn out, the consequence would be that the slightest inclemency would avail them as an excuse for staying at home; but I put a stop to all such evasions, by being always at church, let the weather be what it may, and they can always calculate with certainty upon meeting *me*, if they choose to turn out themselves."

Such diligence and devotion were attended with their natural results. By the blessing

of God, the seed scattered broadcast, and watered with fervent prayers, brought forth an abundant harvest. Bishop Moore remarks, in his address to the Virginia Convention of 1818, "I consecrated a new church in Mecklenburg, erected by the parishioners of the Rev. Mr. Ravenscroft. In that place, in which the Church was thought to be extinct, the friends of our communion have awakened from their slumbers; aided by the exertions of their faithful and laborious minister, they have raised a temple sacred to the living God. May that Saviour whom they worship with so much ardor and sincerity of heart, accept their sacrifice and remember them for good."

During the same Convention, Mr. Ravenscroft was elected one of the four clerical delegates to represent the diocese in the next General Convention.

It must have been extremely gratifying to one who had so recently begun his labors,

to find that they were thus duly appreciated.


The late Dr. Wilmer, a most eminent clergyman of Virginia, thus writes to Mr. Ravenscroft: "The Lord of the vineyard seems to be granting you the rare favor, that as you have entered late into His service you should have the honor and reward of doing much in a short space; while we who have been longer at the work hardly begin to enter upon the fruits, you at once seem to have reaped a glorious harvest. You get even more than your 'penny.'"*

* I hope that my young readers will turn to the parable here referred to, which will be found in St. Matthew, xx. 1-16, and ask their minister or some other person to explain it to them. There is no part of the Bible more generally misunderstood.



Chapter Seventh.

SECOND MARRIAGE—LOSSES AND CROSSES—DILIGENCE QUICKENED—INFLUENCE AMONG HIS BRETHREN—INVITATIONS TO DIFFERENT PARISHES—A CALL TO A STILL WIDER FIELD OF USEFULNESS—HISTORY OF THE CHURCH IN NORTH CAROLINA—FIRST SETTLEMENT BY THE ENGLISH—TRIALS OF THE EARLY SETTLERS—THE REV. JOHN BLAIR, MISSIONARY AND COMMISSARY—HIS FIRST REPORT—FELLOW-LABORERS—REV. JOHN URMSTON—HARDSHIPS—RESULTS OF LABOR.

N the year 1818 Mr. Ravenscroft married the second time. The lady thus chosen to aid and encourage him in his work was Miss Buford, of Lunenburg County, the daughter of one of his oldest friends.

During the winter following his marriage, he sustained a severe loss by fire, his dwelling-house and all it contained being burnt

up while he was absent from home. Misfortune did not come in this shape only, for the value of his estate was seriously impaired by reason of the withdrawal of his attention from worldly pursuits, and mistaken kindness in indorsing for friends reduced him almost to poverty.

None of these trials, however, stopped Mr. Ravenscroft in his work. Indeed, they seemed rather to quicken his diligence, by bringing before his mind more forcibly than ever the important truth, that the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, are the only things which can endure.

Besides the zeal and activity displayed in his own parish, his surpassing abilities and singleness of purpose gave him an unusual degree of influence in the councils of the Church and the societies under its control, and he did not hesitate to stimulate his brethren, by the most affectionate appeals, to constant diligence and faithfulness.

In 1823, he was invited to take charge of a large and flourishing congregation at Norfolk. He would have consulted his worldly interests by going, but having made up his mind never to abandon his own little flock, until Providence should seem plainly to direct him elsewhere, he promptly declined the call. Soon afterwards, he was applied to by the Vestry of the Monumental Church, Richmond, to become the assistant to the venerable Bishop Moore, in the charge of that parish.

Regarding the services of the Bishop, which were seriously interrupted by his additional labors in this congregation, as too important to the diocese to be lost through any impediment which his own private inclinations might present, Mr. Ravenscroft was about to yield to what he could not help considering as an imperative case of duty, when another application, still more important in its character, led him to turn his

thoughts elsewhere, as the field where God was appointing him to labor. I refer to his election as Bishop for the diocese of North Carolina.

And here, that justice may be done to the work which we have undertaken, it will be necessary to give our readers some information concerning the new diocese which was thus seeking to supply itself with an Episcopal head.

The first Englishmen who discovered and took possession of the Province of Carolina were Amadas and Barlowe, who came out to America under the direction of Sir Walter Raleigh, in 1584.

France and Spain, at different periods, set up their respective claims to the same fair region of the earth. We have no room for telling the long story of the various misunderstandings and quarrels between these three rival nations.*

* A well-digested account of the early history of Car-

Parties of emigrants from Virginia, and some from the more northern region of Massachusetts, came to Carolina in search of new homes. The charter granted by Charles II. to the colonists unfolded a grand and imposing scheme for the establishment of an empire in the Western World, and for the spread of the Gospel of Christ.

North Carolina proper embraced a district four hundred and thirty miles long, and about one hundred and eighteen in breadth, and containing an area equal to that of all England. So lately as the year 1702, the population of European descent did not exceed six thousand. The settlers lived widely apart, scattered over the face of a country intersected by swamps and inlets of the sea. Roads, properly so called, there were none; and those who journeyed from one part of the Province to another, made

olina will be found in Anderson's History of the Colonial Church, Vol. II., p. 307, etc.

their way, as best they might, over rivers and through tangled forests, glad to take refuge at night in the rudest hut, or under the shelter of overhanging trees.

Foremost among the devoted ministers of Christ who came, at that early day, to bring the knowledge of salvation to this far-off land, was the Rev. John Blair. Landing in Virginia, in January, 1704, he made his way on horseback to Carolina, of which Province he had been appointed Commissary by the Bishop of London.* At this time there were three small churches in the Colony, with glebes belonging to them.

“I found (he says) in the country a great many children to be baptized, where I baptized about a hundred, and there are a great many still to be baptized whose parents would not condescend to have them baptized with godfathers and godmothers. I

* The office of Commissary is explained in the Life of Bishop Dehon.

married none in the country, for that was a perquisite belonging to the magistrates which I was not desirous to deprive them of. I preached twice every Sunday, and often on the week-days, when their vestries met, or could appoint them to bring their children to be baptized.

“Besides such a solitary, toilsome, and hard living as I met with, there were very sufficient discouragements. I was distant from any minister one hundred and twenty miles, so that if any difficulty or doubt should happen, with whom should I consult? And, for my travelling through the country, I rode, one day with another, Sunday only excepted, above thirty miles per diem, in the worst roads that ever I saw, and have sometimes lain whole nights in the woods.”*

Mr. Blair's fellow-laborers, sent out by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, in

* The whole report will be found in Vol. I. of the Protestant Episcopal Historical Society, p. 184.

1707, and the few next years, were Adams, Gordon, Urmston, Rainsford, Newnan, Garzia, and Moir—some of whom, worn out by the hardships which poverty and fatigue and the indifference or hostility of the people brought upon them, returned soon afterwards to England.

The Rev. John Urmston, writing home, July, 1711, says, "I am at last, together with my family, in manifest danger of perishing for want of food. We have lived many a day only on a dry crust and a draught of salt water out of the Sound."

Again, speaking of the difficulty of reaching the different parts of his mission, he remarks: "In many places there are great rivers, from one, two, to six, twelve, and fifteen miles over, no ferry, neither will the people be at the trouble of setting me over.

"He that will answer the end of his mission must not only have a good horse but a good boat, and a couple of experienced


watermen. I am forced to work hard with axe, hoe, and spade. I have not a stick to burn for any use but what I cut down with my own hands.”

But in spite of all these difficulties the missionary persevered, and as a part of the fruits of his labors, he reports the baptism of a hundred and fifty-four children.



Chapter Eighth.

THE REV. MR. RAINSFORD—SERVICE UNDER THE MULBERRY-TREE—BAPTISM OF NEGROES—LODGING IN THE OLD TOBACCO BARN—INDIAN WARS—WEARIED AND WORN OUT—FRESH LABORERS IN THE FIELD—REV. THOMAS NEWNAN—A LARGE PARISH—HOW THE SUNDAYS WERE DIVIDED—OVER-EXERTION AND EXPOSURE DO THEIR WORK—STILL ANOTHER MISSIONARY—LABORING YET MORE ABUNDANTLY—DEVOTED LAYMEN—DESIRE FOR BISHOPS.

 HE Rev. Giles Rainsford, who came to Carolina about the same time with Mr. Urmston, had the same difficulties to contend with, but was not unrewarded with some tokens of success.

At the first service which he held, many persons were present who had hitherto been perfect strangers to the worship of the

Church. His regular station was Chowan, but he extended his labors to many other points. At an old Indian town on the north shore, great crowds attended, and he baptized seventeen children. The next week he officiated at the house of a Mr. Garrat, at the upper end of Chowan, where such numbers turned out to hear him, that he took his station under a large mulberry-tree, and preached to them out of doors. The missionary was gratified by the devout behavior of the people, and by the heartiness with which they united in the responses and singing.

“By much importunity,” he says, “I prevailed on Mr. Martin to let me baptize three of his negroes. All the arguments I could make use of would scarce effect it, till Bishop Fleetwood’s sermon, preached before the Society, turned the scale.”

Having once made a beginning, Mr. Rainsford persevered in his efforts for the benefit of the colored people, and in one

year he baptized no less than forty of them.

The accommodations for a clergyman's comfort were poor indeed. Speaking on this subject, he remarks: "My lodging, for the best of my time, was in an old tobacco-house, and exposed, even in my bed, to the injuries and violence of bad weather, with other inconveniences, only to settle myself where I thought I had an opportunity of doing most good."

The labors of Mr. Urmston and Mr. Rainsford were seriously interrupted by the Indian wars, which, for a season, seemed to threaten the total ruin of the colony. Had it not been for the timely assistance rendered by the settlers of the neighboring province of South Carolina, there seems every reason to believe that the cunning devices of the enemy would have been successful.

The two missionaries whose course we have thus far pursued, finally became com-

pletely worn out and discouraged, and returned to England.

The Rev. William Gordon and the Rev. James Adams came together as missionaries to North Carolina, in 1707, and after experiencing hardships and privations like those already described, the former went back home at the close of a year, and the latter died as he was preparing to follow him.

Towards the close of 1821, the Rev. Thomas Newnan was sent as a missionary to the province. His first report to the Society, dated June, 1822, contains this interesting statement of his labors:

“After a long and fatiguing voyage of above four months, myself and little family arrived at Carolina. The late Governor Eden being dead, I waited upon the President, a worthy gentleman, delivered him my credentials, with which he declared himself satisfied, and received me with great kindness and respect. I hope I shall do a great

deal of good. The Vestry have laid out my journeys where I am to officiate. The first Sunday I go by water, and some few miles by land, and preach at Esquire Duckingfield's House (which is large enough to hold a good congregation), till such time as they can build a church. The second Sunday I take a journey up to a place called Maharim, about forty miles off, where there are abundance of inhabitants, who are also making a collection to build a church forthwith. The third Sunday I perform Divine Service at Esquire Duckingfield's. The fourth Sunday I go up to a place called Wicacon, about thirty miles' journey. The fifth Sunday I cross the Sound to go to Eden Town, where the Vestry have also proposed to build a church very soon. The sixth Sunday I go up to a chapel on the south shore, about twelve miles by water, and the seventh Sunday begin the same course again. But once every quarter I go up to a place called

Renoque—eighty miles' journey—and the five last Sundays of the year the Vestry allow I may go my rounds, and visit the remote parts of the country, where some inhabitants live, one hundred and fifty miles off—people who will scarce ever have the opportunity of hearing me, or of having their children baptized, unless I go among them.”* Surely this was a pretty extensive field to be cultivated by one single-handed laborer.

Mr. Newnan proved himself to be a workman who needed not to be ashamed, for God rewarded him with good success; but his severe exertions, and exposure in all kinds of weather, brought on severe illness, under which he sunk, in 1723, much to the grief of his people.

In 1732, Mr. John Boyd, who had lived some years in Carolina, went to England, and having received ordination at the hands

* Humphrey's History of the Propagation Society, Chapter V.

of the Bishop of London, returned at once as a missionary to the province. His parish, Albemarle County, was one hundred miles in length and fifty in breadth, and he preached in seven different places, thus obliging him to ride two hundred and sixty miles every month. "This will convey some idea of the painful destitution of the means of grace in which a great part of the settlers must have lived. The duty of many clergymen was laid upon one, who was, of course, unable to meet the requirements of so extensive a district. Even one, however, could do something, and was at least a witness to the colonists that they were not altogether forgotten by the mother church. In 1735, he had baptized one thousand children and thirty adults." * He was also the means of bringing back great numbers into the "old paths" of the Church, who had been drawn


* Hawkins' History of Missions of the English Church, p. 77.

off by teachers of various persuasions around them. Mr. Boyd ended his earthly toils in 1738. We have spoken thus far of the efforts of the *clergy* in advancing the interests of the Gospel; but many of the *laity* were scarcely less earnest and devoted. Colonel Eden, governor of the colony, proved himself to be the warm friend of the Church. Arthur Dobbs, Esq., who held the same office afterwards, was equally zealous, and warmly seconded the efforts which were made to induce the English Government to send out Bishops to America.



Chapter Ninth.

A WELL-TRIED LAYMAN TURNING MISSIONARY—A HUNDRED BAPTISMS A DAY—MR. GARZIA—THE FIFTY POUNDS PER ANNUM—SCANTY LIVING—CLEMENT HALL—WIDE FIELD OF LABOR, AND MUCH ACCOMPLISHED IN IT—HARD TOIL—RESTING FROM HIS LABORS—SIX CLERGYMEN IN THE PROVINCE—AMERICAN REVOLUTION—DARK AND DISMAL DAYS FOR THE CHURCH—THE RALLY OF 1790—ANOTHER RELAPSE—THE DAY-STAR ARISES AT LAST.

E cannot hope to do justice to the labors of the faithful missionaries who gave their lives to the work of preaching the Gospel in North Carolina, but we can at least prevent their names from being altogether forgotten.

In 1739, Mr. James Moir, who had spent six years in South Carolina, where he had

gained many friends, was ordained missionary for the northern province. His field of labor extended along the coast for a hundred and fifty miles, and the people were so scattered that the most he could hope to do was to visit them occasionally, for the purpose of preaching and administering the sacraments.

On some of these journeys he baptized as many as a hundred children a day.

Mr. Garzia, another missionary, states that during the period of five years (from 1733 to 1738), while he served the parish of St. Thomas, he baptized two thousand two hundred and seventy-eight persons.

The Society in England which sent out clergymen to the colonies, allowed each one fifty pounds (\$250) a year towards his support. For his *main* dependence, however, the clergyman was expected to look to the people for whose benefit he labored; but this reliance was found to be most uncertain, and oftentimes failed him entirely. The settlers,

not always in very prosperous circumstances themselves, paid their ministers in rice, or in paper money, which was of little value, and not unfrequently in empty promises alone.

But this sad story is not a new or strange one. There are multitudes of God's chosen servants now laboring in His vineyard, whose bodily wants are as little cared for by those for whom they are wearing out their strength. We spoke, in the last chapter, of the case of Mr. Boyd, who, having lived as a layman for several years in the province, and witnessed the spiritual destitution of the inhabitants, devoted himself to the ministry.

Another instance of the kind is now to be recorded. Clement Hall, who had officiated for some time as lay reader in congregations which could not secure the services of a clergyman, went to England, in 1743, with the highest testimonials, and, having received ordination, returned to North Carolina as a missionary.

Although he chiefly confined himself to Chowan County, he extended his labors, at regular periods, to several others. From one of his reports it appears that, within the space of three weeks, he had preached sixteen times, and baptized twenty adults and four hundred children. "But the mere recital of numbers would describe very imperfectly the amount of labor involved in such visitations. The distance and difficulties of the journeys which they required must also be taken into account; and in the case of Mr. Hall, the difficulties became greater through his own weakness of health. No sooner did he end one visitation than he made preparation for another; and, except when sickness laid him prostrate, his work ceased not for a single day. In the face of much opposition and discouragement, he still pressed onward, and, in many places, was cheered by the eager sympathy of the people. The chapels and court-houses were

seldom large enough to contain half the numbers who flocked together to hear him. Sometimes the place of their solemn meeting was beneath the shades of the forest; at other times, by the river-side, or upon the sea-shore, the work of truth and holiness was permitted to 'have free course and be glorified.' A summary of the labors of Clement Hall, made about eight years after he had entered upon them, shows that, at that time (1752), he had journeyed about 14,000 miles, preached nearly 700 sermons, baptized more than 6,000 children and grown-up persons (among whom were several hundred negroes and Indians), administered the Lord's Supper frequently to as many as two or three hundred in a single journey, besides performing the countless other offices of visiting the sick, and of catechising the young, which he was everywhere careful to do."* All this, it

* Anderson's History of the Colonial Church, III., 491-2.

must be remembered, was accomplished by one whose health was never robust, and who was oftentimes laid up by sickness.

After sixteen years of hard toil, Mr. Hall closed his useful career in the bosom of an affectionate and grateful people.

The fields were white for the harvest, but the laborers were altogether too few to perform the necessary work. In 1764, Governor Dobbs reported that there were at that time only six clergymen to do duty in twenty-nine counties, or parishes, and very properly adds that such was likely to be the case where they had "no Bishops to visit the clergy, and to confirm and confer orders."

Nothing out of the ordinary course of things occurred from this date until the period of the American Revolution. The Church in North Carolina, weak as it was before, was reduced to a condition deplorable indeed, during the continuance of this memorable struggle for our national independ-

ence. Only four of her clergy remained steady at their posts, to discharge the duties of their holy office.

At the close of the war, the Episcopal Church in North Carolina was brought down to almost as hopeless a state as even her worst enemies could desire. And so things continued until 1790, when an abortive attempt was made by her few remaining children to revive their drooping spirits. In that year a Convention was appointed to meet at Tarborough, which accordingly assembled on the 12th of November. Delegates were appointed to attend the General Convention, which was to be held in New York, in 1792.

The Rev. James L. Wilson and Dr. John Leigh proceeded to New York at the time appointed; but the voyage proved to be so unusually long, that the Convention had adjourned before their arrival there. Twenty-three years passed away, and the fortunes of


the Church in North Carolina were in no wise improved. From 1794 to 1817 all was dark and dreary, and no star appeared in any quarter of the horizon.

“It was then,” writes one who was himself an actor upon the stage, “it was then that the day-star from on high visited us in mercy; when two heaven-sent heralds of the everlasting Gospel (the Rev. Adam Empie and the Rev. Bethel Judd) came to Wilmington and Fayetteville, and there laid the foundation of the restoration of the Episcopal Church and cause in North Carolina.”*

* From a long and interesting letter of the Rev. Robert J. Miller, published by Dr. Hawks in the *Church Review*, Vol. III., p. 309. In 1794 the Rev. Charles Pettigrew was elected Bishop of North Carolina, but was never consecrated. Mr. Pettigrew considered the appointment as premature, and only consented to it to prevent an improper person from receiving this high and holy office.

Chapter Tenth.

A FEW MORE INTERMEDIATE STEPS — CONVENTION AT NEWBERN IN 1817—THE SESSION IN THE YEAR FOLLOWING—AN OLD PAMPHLET—CONVENTION AT FAYETTEVILLE — IMPORTANT PROCEEDINGS — REPORT ON THE STATE OF THE CHURCH IN NORTH CAROLINA— BISHOP MOORE'S FIRST VISITATION TO THE DIOCESE— THE LABORS OF A YEAR—GOOD HOPES FOR THE FUTURE.

 WE are now drawing near the period when the subject of this memoir will appear before us in a new and more important relation to the Church. But it will be necessary to notice two or three intermediate steps, which prepared the way for his removal to North Carolina.

A Convention was held in Newbern, in June, 1817, attended by three clergymen and

six or eight lay delegates, when a constitution was adopted, and an address made to the friends of the Church throughout the State, proposing a second convention the following year. This assembly was more numerously attended than the former, and the Church from that time began to rouse herself from her death-like slumber.

The writer has now before him the unpretending little pamphlet in which the proceedings of that important Convention are preserved, "Printed [as the dingy title-page informs us] by William Hollingshead for Thomas Loring. Wilmington, N. C., 1818."

The delegates met at Fayetteville on the second of April, and, after morning prayer by the Rev. John Avery, of St. Paul's Church, Edenton, and an appropriate sermon from the Rev. Adam Empie, the Holy Communion was celebrated. The Rev. Mr. Empie, Rector of St. James' Church, Wilmington, was then re-elected Secretary, and the

Rev. Bethel Judd, Rector of the church in which the Convention met, was chosen President. Besides these clergymen, the Rev. Richard S. Mason, of Christ's Church, Newbern, was present as a member of the body, and the Rev. John Phillips, of Virginia, was admitted to an honorary seat.

Seven lay delegates attended the Convention. In conformity with the appointment made at the former Convention, the Rev. Mr. Judd reported that Bishop Moore, of Virginia, consented to perform Episcopal offices in North Carolina, and that he would be ready to visit the congregations of the diocese during the ensuing summer or autumn.

The Committee on the State of the Church made the following statement in regard to its condition and prospects:—"In November, 1816, the Rev. Bethel Judd, of the diocese of Connecticut, and the Rev. A. Empie, of the diocese of New York, being deprived of health, and advised to change

their climate, met at Wilmington, and during the subsequent winter officiated in the church at that place. Previously to their arrival, there was no Episcopal clergyman in this State, and but one congregation in which the worship of our Church was performed. By their joint endeavors, however, together with the aid of the pious and zealous members of the congregation at Wilmington, under the blessing of God, piety and devout attention to religious ordinances rapidly increased. Since the first of the following May the charge of the congregation has devolved entirely upon its present Rector, the Rev. A. Empie, whose ministrations have been greatly blessed to his own comfort, to the satisfaction of his Christian friends, and, we trust, to the glory of God.

“On the 1st of May, 1817, the Rev. B. Judd removed his station to the charge of a congregation, which, on the preceding Easter

Monday, had by him been organized in Fayetteville. The zeal of that congregation—of which young men form a principal part—has been eminently evinced by their regular and devout attention to the worship of the Church, by their liberal contributions for the support of their minister, and by their donations and exertions for the erection of a church, which will soon be completed, and which, when completed, will be equal, perhaps, in point of elegance, to any in the State.

“About the 1st of January, 1817, the Rev. Mr. Clay took charge of the church at Newbern, and by his assiduity and talents gave great hopes of extensive usefulness; but circumstances inducing his removal to the diocese of Maryland, cast a gloom for a time over the prospects, and damped the zeal of the friends of Zion. A seasonable relief, however, is anticipated from the talents and zealous efforts of the Rev. Mr. Mason,

who has recently commenced his labors in that congregation with every prospect of success. The Rev. Mr. Avery, having for some time taught an academy, and performed the duties of lay-reader at Edenton, was ordained in October last, and now officiates as the minister of that congregation; which, though not numerous, gives good evidence of its desire to promote religion, particularly by a very generous contribution for the support of missionaries in this State—an object in which all the friends of our Church should feel a deep interest, and to which we cherish the hope that they will be liberal to the utmost extent of their means.”

A great deal had certainly been accomplished during the space of a single year, and much more yet remained to be done. The materials out of which the living temple was to be built up were ready at hand; but more clergymen were needed to go on with the work.

According to his promise, Bishop Moore made a visit to the parishes in North Carolina, in the autumn of 1818, and thus speaks of it in his address to the Virginia Convention the next year. "The Church in North Carolina is rising in all the vigor of youth. A new edifice has been lately erected in Fayetteville, an ornament to the town, and a credit to the exertions of its founders, which I consecrated to the service of Almighty God. I confirmed in that place sixty persons, and admitted the Rev. Mr. Shaw to the order of Deacons. Among the list of worthies who have exerted themselves in the building of the church in Fayetteville, I find the names of Cameron and Winslow, the sons of two of our deceased clergy. May the spirit of their fathers continue to animate their bosoms, and may the children of other ministers imitate their noble and laudable example!


"The Church in Wilmington is also in a

prosperous condition. I preached in that place to pious, crowded auditories, and confirmed one hundred and thirty-three persons. Newbern is also rising in importance. The congregation have determined to erect a new church, upon the plan of that in Fayetteville. I preached at Newbern five times in three days, confirmed fifty-two persons, and administered the Lord's Supper to a large body of pious communicants. I visited Washington, Greenville, and Tarborough, and preached several times in each place."



Chapter Eleventh.

BISHOP MOORE VISITS NORTH CAROLINA AGAIN—REPORT OF HIS LABORS THERE—IMPORTANT STEP IN 1823—MR. RAVENSCROFT CHOSEN BISHOP OF NORTH CAROLINA—QUALIFICATIONS FOR THIS POSITION—CONSECRATION—ENTERS INTO THE HARVEST—SETTLEMENT OF FIRST PRINCIPLES—SERMON AT THE PRIMARY CONVENTION—ENERGY IN PREACHING—ANECDOTE—KNOWLEDGE OF HUMAN NATURE—THE STAGE-COACH DISCUSSION ABOUT RACE-HORSES, AND WHAT GREW OUT OF IT.

HE next year (1819) good Bishop Moore, besides attending faithfully to his own duties in Virginia, made another visitation to North Carolina. On this occasion he presided at the Convention of this young and promising diocese.

“In Edenton [he remarks], at which place the Convention convened, our sittings

were attended by great numbers of people, some of whom had come from a distance of fifty miles, to witness our proceedings and attend upon our ministry. In that place I ordained two Deacons, and admitted one gentleman to the Priesthood. In that diocese, so late as the year 1817, there was not a single clergyman; they are now blessed with the labors of seven faithful men, and in the course of another year several candidates who are now preparing for holy orders, will be admitted to the ministry of the Word."

The venerable Bishop of Virginia continued his patriarchal supervision of the Church in North Carolina until the year 1823, when the Convention, which assembled at Salisbury, elected the Rev. John S. Ravenscroft, by a unanimous vote, to the office of Bishop. Never was a person taken more completely by surprise. Mr. Ravenscroft was a stranger to almost every individual in

the Convention; but his good name had gone abroad, and in calling upon him to accept this most important office, the Churchmen of North Carolina were well assured that their confidence was reposed on one who would never disappoint their hopes.

A zealous and devoted servant of Christ—a man disinterested to a fault, and possessing rare qualifications for usefulness as a preacher and pastor—it was believed that the uncompromising firmness with which he held fast to the Gospel in the Church, would keep the children of Zion steadfast in the faith, and draw back many into the right way, who had thus far been wandering abroad.

Mr. Ravenscroft could not but think that a call so unexpected and unsought for must, indeed, be considered as a voice from God, and he did not dare to decline the position of labor and trial which thus presented itself before him. Relying, therefore, on the

help of God, he signified his readiness to accept the appointment, and he was accordingly consecrated Bishop of North Carolina, during the session of the General Convention at Philadelphia, on Thursday, May 22d, 1823.

The service was held in St. Paul's Church, the venerable Bishop White presiding, and Bishops Griswold, Kemp, Croes, Bowen, and Brownell being present and assisting.

As the Church in North Carolina was still in its infancy, it was necessary for the Bishop to assume the charge of a parish, in addition to his Episcopal duties, in order to secure a support. Immediately after his consecration, Bishop Ravenscroft hastened to Raleigh, and began his labors as Rector of the church there, and within a month from the adjournment of the General Convention he had entered upon his first visitation to the several parishes of his diocese. One of his first efforts was to impress upon his

clergy and people a proper estimation of Baptism and Confirmation; and in order to this, he preached often and earnestly on these important subjects, and taught from house to house, as he journeyed through the State. At the opening of the primary Convention of the Diocese, the Bishop delivered an able sermon, setting forth in plain terms his views in regard to the Church, and the most effectual means of promoting its growth and prosperity, and communicating the details of the course which he should feel bound to pursue.

No one who ever listened to the glowing words of Bishop Ravenscroft, while standing in the pulpit and addressing his fellow-men, as the ambassador whom God had appointed, could doubt for a moment his thorough sincerity, and his anxious desire to do the will of Him that sent him.

“I remember well his intense energy in preaching,” remarks Bishop Whittingham, in

a letter to the writer of this memoir, "and how, on one occasion, in Philadelphia, his entire possession of his work was shown in the fact that, the fastening of his cravat having given way in preaching, he went on uninterruptedly, and with undiminished earnestness of delivery, while with one hand he deliberately relieved his neck of the entanglement of the offending garment, and laid it down behind him. This I saw, and well remember how it rather increased than in any way detracted from the effect of his energetic eloquence."

The training which the Bishop had gone through with in former days, and his acquaintance with human nature, enabled him to do a work for the Church in North Carolina, which some cloistered student, rich in stores of Greek and Hebrew, would have been unable to accomplish. As an illustration of what we mean, a well-authenticated anecdote is introduced. The Bishop was

once riding in a stage-coach, through his extensive diocese, with a company of Southern planters, all strangers to himself, when the conversation turned upon the subject of *race-horses!* As the discussion waxed warm, and the passengers took different sides, an old gentleman, who was one of the champions, appealed to the Bishop to sustain the opinions he had expressed, not at all suspecting that he was addressing a dignitary of the Church.

Bishop Ravenscroft happened, at an earlier period of his life, to have been thoroughly versed in matters of the sort; and, when thus unexpectedly called upon, he came to the assistance of the perplexed controversialist with a hearty good-will.

As usual with him, he carried the day. Some time after, the old gentleman discovered who his valuable ally was; and, in speaking of him to a friend, in the highest terms of admiration, he added, as a climax


to his praises, “*Why, he knows all about race-horses!*”

Learning, about this time, that the Bishop was endeavoring to build a church in some desolate place, he sent him a generous contribution towards the object.



Chapter Twelfth.

SEVERE LABOR—THE PENALTY OF OVER-EXERTION—OCCUPATION OF A SICK CHAMBER—CONTROVERSY—DIVISIONS AMONG CHRISTIANS DEPLORED—TWO MODES OF DOING CHURCH WORK—BOTH GOOD IN THEIR WAY—THE COURSE WHICH NECESSITY URGED UPON BISHOP RAVENSCROFT—LETTER TO BISHOP HOBART—FAINT, YET PURSUING—HUMBLENESS OF A GREAT MIND.

 BISHOP RAVENSCROFT had thrown his whole soul into the work from the first day of his ordination to the ministry; but now that he was not only the Rector of a parish, but the chief shepherd of a whole diocese, every energy of body and mind was taxed to the utmost, in the discharge of the duties of his high calling.

The farthest western congregation was more than three hundred miles distant from the most eastern one; and yet, even after disease had laid its firm grasp upon him, constantly reminding him of the uncertainty of life, he punctually made his annual visits to both.

A younger man might, perhaps, have undergone the fatigue and exposure of these long journeys with less difficulty, but certainly no hero ever faced difficulties and dangers with a bolder front than did the venerable Bishop of North Carolina.

Hardships and anxieties of mind, however, soon left their mark upon his once vigorous constitution, and during the whole of the second winter after his removal to the diocese he was confined to the house by illness. But even the sick chamber was no place of idleness and repose.

Just before his first illness he had been invited to preach before the Bible Society at

its annual meeting, in December, at the city of Raleigh, although he had openly expressed his disapprobation of one feature in the constitution of the Society. Availing himself of the occasion, he explained his objections, and gave in general his views of the proper principle upon which Bible societies should be founded to be most efficient in their operations.

This sermon having been published, elicited very severe animadversions from various quarters, and eventually attracted the notice of a celebrated professor of theology in Virginia. That gentleman, in his strictures upon the sermon, and the publications arising out of it, having assailed the Church of which Bishop Ravenscroft was a member and a minister, the Bishop felt himself imperiously called upon to stand forth to vindicate it from his aspersions.

Though worn by severe and protracted illness, the result of his labors was a masterly

and triumphant *vindication of the doctrines of the Church.**

However much all good people must deplore the divisions which mar the face of the Christian world, it is certainly the bounden duty of those whom God has called to watch over the affairs of His Church, to be ready, on all suitable occasions, to give a reason for the hope that is in them.

To Bishop Ravenscroft was committed the arduous undertaking of setting in order the affairs of a new diocese, which had its beginning in the midst of those who were bitterly opposed to the Church, and a man with a spirit less bold and determined might have been cowed into silence, or induced to conceal the more unpopular features of religion. But he had not so learned his duty. Cost what it might, he was ready to live and die by principles which he believed to be founded in truth.

* Bishop Ravenscroft's Works, Vol. I., 42, 43.

There will always be a difference of opinion among good men as to the best mode of extending the Church. Some seek to win their way quietly and almost imperceptibly, attaching the people to them by their faithfulness in preaching the Gospel and by their diligence as pastors, leaving the peculiarities of the Church to come afterwards; while they who are no less zealous in the discharge of these duties, will feel it incumbent on them not only to bring forward the truths of religion, which are held in common by all true believers, but also to follow the example of St. Paul, and “*Speak concerning Christ and the Church.*”

There can be no question that both of these modes of operation have their peculiar advantages, and while one may succeed best under certain circumstances, the other would be found most effectual among a different class of people, with inquiring minds, and with the means of investigation within their

reach. Bishop Griswold and Bishop Moore may be mentioned as examples of those who acted upon the first of the principles, and Bishop Hobart and Bishop Ravenscroft of those who pursued the latter course.

Were not all of these men devotedly attached to the same branch of Christ's holy Church? Did they not all labor with the same spirit of self-sacrifice and devotion to advance its interests? No one can deny it. Does not this show us that God works by different instrumentalities, and in various ways, for the accomplishment of the same great end? And ought not such considerations to pour oil upon the troubled waters, and keep the whole Church in peace?

In the last paragraph I have coupled together the names of Hobart and Ravenscroft. This seems a favorable opening for introducing a letter from the Bishop of North Carolina to his Right Reverend brother of New York, upon his return to America, after

a visit to Europe for the benefit of his health:

RALEIGH, *March 18, 1826.*

RIGHT REV. AND DEAR SIR—It was my anxiety not to appear indifferent to the happy event of your restoration to health, to your family, and to the Church, through the miscarriage of a letter (which is a very common thing), that prompted me to write the second time. I well knew that you could have time for nothing but to meet and answer the congratulations of your numerous friends.

I thank you very gratefully for the favorable opinion you are pleased to entertain and express of my principles and conduct.

The situation of this southern country, surrendered for the last forty or fifty years to the exclusive influence of the dissenters, left me no alternative but to increase that influence by adopting half-way measures, or, by a decided course, to call into action what

was left of predilection for the Church, to rally her real friends around her standard, and to strike fear into her enemies by the unqualified assertion of her distinctive character; and I have cause of thankfulness beyond expression, that it has pleased God to give success so far to the little I have been enabled to do. Multitudes have owned to me, that but for the imperious call upon their most serious consideration, occasioned by the announcement of the doctrines of the Church, they might have gone dreaming through life, without once realizing their practical use to the assurance of faith.

Our progress is comparatively slow in organizing new congregations. We want missionaries, and have funds to employ two, but cannot obtain them; yet my hope is strong—it is not my cause but the Lord's, and His providence is so distinct in His overruling direction of events for the furtherance

of that cause, that both my clergy and myself are greatly encouraged.

The habits and occupations of my best years were not favorable to the retaining, far less to the improvement, of a good education. Every hour I have cause to regret that improvidence which abandoned the continuation of mental improvement, and in a good degree threw away the fruits of care, and pains, and expense in my early education.

But I foresaw not the use the Lord had for me. Wonderful it is that He should have sought me out, and what is left of me I wish to be all His. Remember me in your prayers, help me with your counsel, reprove me where I am in error or wrong, and believe me, very truly and affectionately, your friend and brother in the Lord,

JOHN S. RAVENSCROFT.*


* Berrian's Life of Bishop Hobart, Vol. I., p. 364.

Beautiful example of humility in a great and noble mind! Bishop Hobart was several years younger than the Bishop of North Carolina, yet the elder calls upon him for his counsels, his reproofs, and his prayers.



Chapter Thirteenth.

BRETHREN DWELLING TOGETHER IN UNITY — BISHOP MOORE'S LETTER — A VIRGINIA CONVENTION — LOVE FOR THE CHURCH—MEN OF PRAYER—WRESTLINGS OF A DEVOUT SPIRIT—ENTERING INTO THE CLOSET—DELIGHT IN THE STUDY OF GOD'S WORD—"WHAT COMMENTATOR SHALL I CONSULT?"—TEACHINGS OF THE SPIRIT.

HE letter given in the last chapter shows for itself the friendly relations which existed between Bishop Ravenscroft and Bishop Hobart. As they sympathized so perfectly in their views of the Church, such an appearance of brotherly kindness will occasion no surprise. In order to sustain the position laid down before, that Churchmen of every grade, being left free to promote the

welfare of God's kingdom in the way which seems to each the best calculated to secure this end, may live on the closest terms of intimacy with one another, I shall introduce a letter from the venerable Bishop of Virginia, written less than two years before Bishop Ravenscroft's decease.

RICHMOND, VA., *March 19th*, 1828.

RIGHT REV. AND DEAR SIR—The last meeting of our Convention in Fredericksburg was one of the most interesting that I have ever witnessed. It was thought that there were at least twelve hundred visitors in that place on that occasion, and those visitors people of the first distinction in our country.

I look forward to our contemplated meeting in Petersburg with hope; and should it please God to bless us with such a sense of His presence as was enjoyed in Fredericksburg, it will meet the most sincere expression of gratitude. It would afford me the great-

est satisfaction, could you make it convenient to visit Petersburg at that time; and I have no doubt all your old friends would be pleased to see you also. You once delighted to be with us, and it is my belief you would be delighted again; for if I know you, and I think I do, you are not adverse to the most ardent expression of devotion. I am now an old man, and cannot be far distant from that country to which we are all hastening; and as I believe we shall experience no coldness in heaven, I do not see why the Church below should not taste a little of that joy of which we hope to partake in another and a better world. You must perceive that I am now addressing you as I formerly did, when you resided in Virginia; and should the friendly expression I use touch that chord of affection which used to beat in perfect unison with my own feelings, you will not be offended with me. I love order—I love the Liturgy of the Church with all the powers

of my heart, but am of opinion that our services, instead of producing formality, are calculated to make us feel, and rejoice, and give thanks.

Your affectionate friend and brother,

RICHARD CHANNING MOORE.*

Little did the venerable writer of this letter (then in his sixty-sixth year) suppose that *he* should be living and laboring on the earth for more than eleven years after his brother Bishop, who was ten years younger than himself, had gone to that better country of which he so touchingly speaks! Yet so it was ordered by HIM who doeth all things well.

However Bishop Moore and Bishop Ravenscroft might differ in opinion as to the best mode of extending the Church among those who were ignorant of her high and holy claims, it could not be said that the one

* Henshaw's Life of Bishop Moore, p. 234.

went beyond the other in sincere attachment for her, since both spent their lives in her service, and both died while engaged in the field of duty.

It is apparent, from the most cursory reading of the letter just quoted, that the Bishop of Virginia was *a man of prayer*. The same was true of the Bishop of North Carolina. "I cannot conclude these brief notices of my beloved diocesan," writes one who knew him most intimately for years, "without advert- ing to what I conceive was one of his most distinguishing and lovely characteristics—I mean *his devotion in private*. On more than one occasion I have been unavoidably placed as an ear-witness of his moments of retired devotion—a devotion to which I am sure that he thought there were no witnesses but himself and his God. And it was at such times that I wished a censorious world could have stood in my place. I distinctly remember the first time that I was so situated.

Such were the strong wrestlings and deep groanings of that man of God in prayer, that my first impulse was to fly to his assistance, fearing lest some sudden and violent pain had seized upon him ; but a moment's reflection convinced me that it was not *bodily* anguish that wrung these complainings from him, but an agony of spirit, which seemed driven for relief to these plaintive moanings. Oh, how hard would he seem to wrestle with his God ! Every groan that burst from his laboring soul seemed to say, *I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me.* Nor was his a short-lived or transitory devotion. Three times a day, like the prophet of old, did he kneel upon his knees, and, unless pressed by other duties, he continued in prayer for the space of half an hour. His usual custom was to go from the reading of God's Word to the seeking of His face in prayer. Indeed, I have never known a more diligent reader of the Bible. It was ever open on his desk,

and in the composition of his sermons he seldom sought assistance beyond its pages. Enter his study when you would, there was his Bible on one side of him, and his Concordance on the other. As a practical expounder of Scripture I have never known his equal. He left to others the applause of critical acumen and deep research, and sought rather to bring every passage of God's Word to bear upon the conscience of the sinner. And in these practical applications of Scripture he was peculiarly solemn and interesting. When in health, I have known him, after preaching twice or thrice in the day, lecture at family prayers for thirty or forty minutes, upon, perhaps, the first chapter that met his eye on opening the Bible. And on these occasions it has often been thought by his friends that, in point of force of manner and richness of thought, he even exceeded his more deliberate pulpit exercises."

The study of the Scriptures was Bishop Ravenscroft's delight, and he would have all go to this fountain-head to drink in refreshment for their souls. When asked by the young and inexperienced, "What commentator shall I consult in reading my Bible?" his invariable answer was, "No one. Read it on your knees, and the SPIRIT of truth will make all necessary things plain unto you."



Chapter Fourteenth.

A SUNDAY AMONG THE MORAVIAN BRETHREN—EARLY SERVICE AT THE SCHOOL—WORSHIP IN THE CHURCH—INTRODUCTION TO BISHOP BENADE—LOVE-FEAST—FRIENDLY INTERVIEW—LONGINGS AFTER UNITY—THE LORD'S SUPPER—MODE OF ITS ADMINISTRATION—NIGHT SERVICE—PARTING WITH MUTUAL EXPRESSIONS OF REGARD—A PETITION IN WHICH ALL TRUE CHRISTIANS MUST HEARTILY UNITE.

IT would be comparatively easy to turn over Bishop Ravenscroft's reports to the Convention of North Carolina, and inform our readers, in detail, as to the time of his visitations to the several parishes, and the number of persons confirmed in each; but we prefer, in the small space allotted for this memoir, to bring forward such facts only as will be of interest to all. With this view, a somewhat

extended extract will here be given, from the journal of one of his visitations to the western part of the diocese :

“ *August 12, 1827.—Sunday.*—I attended the services of the Moravian Brethren in this place [Salem], which commenced in the chapel of the female school at half-past eight in the morning, and was performed in English, by singing accompanied with the organ, extempore prayer standing, and a short discourse from Revelation iii. 11. The school is very numerous, and great order and uniformity are maintained. At ten o'clock the services commenced in the church, by singing, accompanied with the organ and other instruments. The line is given out by the minister, and all sing sitting. After the singing, their Bishop, by name Benade, preached sitting, and with great fluency and force, though in the German language, and, therefore, not understood by me and the other visitors.

“ After the discourse, prayer was made, at which the congregation stood, after which they sung and were dismissed. After the services I was asked into the vestry-room, and introduced to the Bishop and one of his presbyters, but had no opportunity for conversation beyond that of civility. It being a festival-day, commemorative of some remarkable event in their history, the Bishop’s time was very limited.

“ At one o’clock their love-feast was held, to which I was invited and attended. At this there were no other services than the singing of a jubilee psalm in parts, by the choir and congregation, accompanied with the instrumental music, during which there was handed to every individual present a round cake or kind of light bun, and a half-pint mug of coffee, which was partaken of by all during the singing, as each was disposed.

“ The parts performed by the choir were

executed standing, in opposite galleries: the congregation sang sitting. At the close, all stood to sing the hallelujah.

“After the love-feast, I had another interview with Bishop Benade in the vestry-room, when he informed me the Communion would be administered after an interval of about two hours—say half-past three o’clock—at which I could attend, either as a spectator or a communicant. To this I replied, that though curiosity was in part the cause of my visit to Salem, yet it was not the sole cause, it being my real desire, as we were the only two Episcopal churches in America which could and would acknowledge each other [for the Romanists presented an insuperable bar], to know more of them, and let them know more of us. If, therefore, I was present, it would be as a communicant, and I must accordingly request information as to the mode of administering. This was immediately explained to me, and there being

nothing, in my judgment, unscriptural or inconsistent with the essentials of a sacrament, I concluded to commune with them. At the appointed hour the Church [meaning thereby the communicants] assembled, amounting to upwards of two hundred persons, and at a signal given by the bell, the vestry-room door was opened, the organ began a solemn voluntary, and the Bishop, with the Priests and Deacon, walked up to the altar, carrying the bread in two baskets, covered with a white linen cloth, themselves habited in white surplices, bound round the loins with a broad girdle. The wine was previously placed upon the altar in six decanters, with glass mugs to distribute it. The altar was covered with white drapery, ornamented with festoons of artificial flowers.

“On the Bishop’s taking the chair, he gave out the line of a hymn, which was sung by the people to the organ. He then delivered a short exhortation, and proceeded

to the consecration of the elements, which was exactly similar to our own mode, in the recitation of Scripture, and the laying of his hand on the bread, and on the wine, previously poured into the mugs. When the consecration was finished, a Priest, attended by a Deacon bearing the bread on the right side of the altar, and another Priest, attended by a Deaconess with the bread on the left side thereof, proceeded to administer to the communicants in this wise. The bread was prepared very white and thin, unleavened, and in oblong shapes, sufficient for two portions. On coming to me, to whom it was first presented, the Deacon administered to two at a time, until the whole Church had received, each row of seats rising up to receive, and again sitting down holding the bread in their hands. When the communicants were all served, the baskets were returned to the altar, when the Bishop and clergy having taken the bread likewise, the

organ ceased, and all knelt down in silence and ate the bread. A due portion of time was appropriated to private devotion, and towards the close the organ struck a most solemn strain, to which the communicants all responded in a verse of a hymn sung upon their knees.

“When this was finished, all rose up and the cup was then distributed, each drinking and handing to his neighbor—the Deacon attending to replenish and to pass it from one row of seats to another. The ceremony was concluded with a hymn of praise, and dismissal of the congregation—I presume with the apostolic benediction—and all I have to regret is, that I was a stranger to their language.

“At half-past seven the services again commenced, and were precisely similar to those in the forenoon. One of the Priests delivered the sermon, being the same whom I heard in the school chapel in the morning


in English ; but in a very different style and manner of address and delivery in his native language. During this service Bishop Benade and myself sat together, and at the close we took leave of each other, I trust, with mutual Christian regard, and with the desire of a more close acquaintance.”

That Bishop Ravenscroft was sincerely desirous to see all branches of the Church of Christ living together in harmony and peace, may be gathered from this instance of his going out of his way to meet with the Moravian Brethren.* May God hasten the time when all the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord Jesus Christ !

* The origin of the Moravian Brethren is rather doubtful and obscure. Some account of this Society will be found in Hook's Church Dictionary.

Chapter Fifteenth.

THE BISHOP LEAVES THE PARISH AT RALEIGH—REMOVAL TO WILLIAMSBOROUGH—LAST EARTHLY TIE BROKEN—THE CONVENTION OF 1829 RELEASES HIM FROM PAROCHIAL CHARGE—VISIT TO TENNESSEE AND KENTUCKY—LABORS OF DR. CHAPMAN—KENTUCKY ORGANIZED AS A DIOCESE—BISHOP RAVENSCROFT AT LEXINGTON—NINETY-ONE CONFIRMED—INTERESTING PARTICULARS.

HE parish at Raleigh, of which Bishop Ravenscroft was Rector, had so increased in size and importance, that it required more active and uninterrupted labor than his duties to the diocese at large and his failing health would allow him to bestow, and accordingly, early in the year 1828, he resigned this pastoral charge.

The congregations of Newbern and Wilmington—both of which were strong and in-

fluential—were anxious to secure him for their pastor, although his time would be thus limited by other cares; but he thought it best, on the whole, to settle in the village of Williamsborough, where the people had never enjoyed the privilege of regular services, and, on this account, would be less likely to receive injury from ministrations which must necessarily be oftentimes interrupted.

Soon after his removal to his new home, the Bishop met with an irreparable loss in the death of his devoted wife, who was called away from earthly anxieties and cares, in January, 1829.

It was a great source of comfort to her husband, that not a single cloud obscured the brightness of her heavenly prospect, and as he himself expressed it, in his strong and vigorous style, “there was not even a distorted feature in the agonies of death, to betray any quailing before the king of terrors.”

The last earthly bond which bound the good Bishop to this world was now severed forever. His own frail health rendered the loss of this gentle and sympathizing companion the more grievous, but it brought him nearer to the Saviour.

The Convention of 1829, sensible of the increasing infirmities of their chief pastor, resolved to release him entirely from the care of a parish. It is greatly to be regretted that this relief did not come sooner, for the visitation immediately preceding this session of the Convention was the last he was ever to make to the diocese, which owed so much to his faithful labors.

Immediately after the adjournment of this body, the Bishop set out to fulfil a promise which he had made to visit the few churches of our communion scattered through Tennessee. While at Nashville, he received an urgent letter from the Rev. George T. Chapman, the Rector of Christ Church, Lexing-

ton, Kentucky, begging the favor of him to extend his journey to that place.

Hitherto, the Episcopalians of Kentucky had never enjoyed the benefits of a visitation from a Bishop, and the state of slumber and inaction into which they had sunk seemed only the precursors of death.

Dr. Chapman, the distinguished author of "Sermons on the Church"—through whose agency the scattered sons of the Church were brought together—thus speaks of his efforts in this noble cause: "In the spring of 1829, knowing that the General Convention was to meet that year in Philadelphia, in concert with some prominent members of my Church, I took measures to secure the organization of the State of Kentucky, as a diocese of the Protestant Episcopal Church. Having heard that a few Episcopalians were living at Danville, I set off for that place on the 30th of May, and having in a few days collected these persons together, my object in visiting

them was fully explained, and the result was a speedy organization of a church, and the appointment of delegates to attend the then proposed State Convention at Lexington, in July. From Danville I proceeded to Louisville, at that time destitute of a Rector, preached in the church in that city, June 7—stated my object to its members, in which they cordially concurred, and also appointed the desired delegates. Returning to Lexington the same week, preparations were made for the meeting of the Convention.* It as-

* As the Journal of this primary Convention is now a rare document, the writer gives a few items from the copy in his possession. There were three clergymen present—viz., the Rev. George T. Chapman, D.D., Rector of Christ Church, Lexington; the Rev. Benj. O. Peers, Deacon, Principal of the Pestalozzi Academy, and the Rev. John Ward, Principal of a Female Academy—all of the same city. The lay delegates represented three parishes, and their names were as follows. From *Christ Church, Louisville*, Messrs. Richard Barnes, John Bustard, and John P. Smith. From *Trinity Church, Danville*, Messrs. Daniel Barbee, Henry I. Cowan, Ephraim M'Dowell, M.D.; Edward Worthington, and Frederick Yeiser

sembled in Christ Church, on Wednesday, July 8, 1829. Divine service was celebrated and a sermon preached by me, being the only settled clergyman in the State. The organization of the Diocese was then happily effected, there being several lay delegates from the three parishes of Lexington, Louisville, and Danville, and three of the clerical order from Lexington, when the Convention, after discharging its remaining duties, adjourned.**

Soon after this important step had been taken, Dr. Chapman learned from the papers that Bishop Ravenscroft was then on a visit to Nashville, and addressed him a letter, as has been already mentioned.

He cheerfully acceded to the request

From *Christ Church, Lexington*, Messrs. Richard Ashton, John E. Cook, M.D.; Anthony Dumesnil, Josiah Dunham, John W. Hunt, Charlton Hunt, William Morton, and Thomas Smith.

* Spirit of Missions, Vol. XIII., No. 4. April, 1848, p. 97, 98.

which had been made, that he would come on to Kentucky, before returning home, and stated the probable time when he might be expected at Lexington. The prospect of a visit from this venerable servant of the Cross at once excited great interest among the people. Those whose traditional love for the Church had been brought from Virginia, at an early day, but whose allegiance might long since have given way, but for the old dust-covered Prayer Books which were preserved as heir-looms in their families, now felt their old attachment revive.

The class of Churchmen whose minds had been impressed by the powerful writings of Chapman and Cooke,* and who regarded the Church as God's kingdom in the world, took courage when it was noised abroad that a Bishop would soon be with them, to administer those ordinances of the Gospel,

* See sketch of Dr. Cooke's Life in Church Review. July, 1856, Vol. IX., p. 226.

which had never yet been brought to the far-off West.


The highest expectations which had been raised by reports of Bishop Ravenscroft's heart-stirring eloquence were more than realized, when he made his appearance at Lexington. His matchless energy, and his glowing piety, sustained and rendered even more commanding by his manly proportions, roused to enthusiasm the hopes of the children of Zion.

Dr. Chapman thus speaks of this visit in a letter written expressly for this work: "The Bishop arrived at my house in Lexington, at eight o'clock, Saturday evening, July 25, 1829, and was therefore seen for the first time by the congregation, on the next morning, in Christ Church, when seventy-one persons were confirmed, and on Tuesday, the 28th, twenty more. The Bishop went the following day, and made no other acquaintance in Kentucky, but the passing

through it, in the stage, from Nashville to Maysville. At Lexington he was most cordially received, and preached three admirable discourses, which were listened to by crowded audiences with profound attention. On Monday and Tuesday my house was thronged with those desirous of testifying their admiration of this truly excellent and evangelical Bishop. On these occasions, I took good care, by leading questions, to have him discourse on the great doctrines of the Cross, and this he did fully and freely to large numbers of delighted hearers. These interviews were altogether of a spiritual cast. The Bishop was the only speaker, and as it was with Paul at Athens, so it was with him. 'His spirit was stirred within him,' to declare the whole counsel of God with such fervor, that all found it good for their souls to be there. The language I do not profess to remember, but the effect was electric and searching—'a solemn stillness reigned around.'"

Chapter Sixteenth.

A LONG JOURNEY—STATE OF HEALTH—GENERAL CONVENTION—MEDICAL ADVICE—PROSPECT OF RECOVERY—RETURN HOME—RELAPSE—LAST SERVICE—NO MORE HOPE OF LIFE—DEATH—BED CONVERSATIONS—DR. FREEMAN'S NARRATIVE—FOLLY OF REPENTANCE DELAYED UNTIL THE CLOSE OF LIFE—COMMUNION OF THE SICK—THE SLEEP OF DEATH.

HE Episcopal visitation to Tennessee and Kentucky, spoken of in the last chapter, cost Bishop Ravenscroft a long and fatiguing journey—more than a thousand miles of which he performed in stages and steamboats, and a good part of that distance being over a rough and mountainous region.

His friends entertained hopes that the trip might benefit his health, and he probably had some slight anticipations of the sort him-

self; but they were by no means realized. He attended the General Convention in Philadelphia, and then continued a month in the city, after the close of the session, in order to enjoy the benefit of medical advice. The skill of the eminent physicians who prescribed for him was so far successful that he returned to North Carolina with sanguine expectations that, by proper care, his health might be thoroughly re-established.

Thus far, the Bishop had always been reckless in the exposure of himself to the inclemencies of weather, and while his constitution remained vigorous he, seemed to suffer little inconvenience. His physicians had so strongly impressed upon him the absolute necessity of greater prudence, that he went home with a determination to follow their advice. He was, however, exposed to severe cold, from a sudden change of weather, while going to Fayetteville, where he intended to make his future home, and all

the worst symptoms of his disease again returned, in a still more alarming shape. The Bishop disposed of his effects in Williamsborough, preparatory to his removal, and had reached Raleigh in December, where he designed to remain during the session of the Legislature.

His health was now so miserable that his friends were filled with the most serious alarm. He continued, however, to struggle manfully against his disease, and prepared a sermon for the consecration of Christ Church, Raleigh, and performed that service.

The chronic diarrhœa, to which he had so long been subject, was rapidly wearing away his strength, and other forms of disease began to develope themselves.

Writing to a friend on the last of January, 1830, he says: "I am weakening daily, and now can just sit up long enough at a time to scribble a letter occasionally." And then he adds: "As respects the result, I am, thank

God, free from apprehension. I am ready. I humbly trust, through the grace of my Divine Saviour, to meet the will of God, whether that shall be for life or for death; and I humbly thank CHRIST JESUS, my LORD, who sustains me in patience and cheerfulness through the valley and shadow of death.”

The Bishop's mind was fully made up that this sickness would prove his last; but he enjoyed the reasonable, religious, and holy hope of a Christian. Even to the closing hour of life, he continued to bear testimony to the great truths of the Gospel, which he had so faithfully preached.

The Rev. George W. Freeman, then Rector of Christ Church, Raleigh, and now Bishop of Arkansas,* has furnished some interesting particulars of Bishop Ravenscroft's last days. The original manuscript containing them has been kindly lent to the writer,

* News of the decease of this esteemed prelate is still recent, while these pages are passing through the press.

for the better accomplishment of his purpose.

“On one occasion,” says Dr. Freeman, “several persons being present, I turned to the book of Proverbs, and read to those who were sitting by me the following passage [Chap. xx. 21]—*An inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning, but the end thereof shall not be blessed*—and proceeded to observe how little encouragement was afforded by this passage for a man to make haste to be rich, etc. When I ceased speaking, the Bishop, who I thought was not attending to what passed, exclaimed: ‘There is another lesson to be learned from it. It may be applied to those who have hastily obtained a religious inheritance—who place their dependence on those sudden and evanescent fervors which they have experienced in some moment of excitement.’

“With respect to his own prospects he appeared to entertain no apprehensions. I

asked him, a few days before his decease, if he had never, during his illness, been troubled with doubts and misgivings?

“‘Never,’ said he. ‘So free have I been from any suggestions of the enemy, that I have never doubted for a moment, except that the thought has sometimes come over me that my tranquillity is possibly an evidence that Satan thinks himself sure of me, and therefore lets me alone.’

“On my answering, that as he had been laboring to pull down Satan’s kingdom—had been constantly engaged in fighting, not in his ranks, but in opposition to him, it was not reasonable to suppose that he had any claims upon him.

“‘True,’ said he; ‘but then I have had such a body of sin to struggle against, and seem now to have been so much engaged in preaching myself, rather than God, that I feel humbled in the dust. My only ground of consolation is, that as CHRIST suffered in

weakness for our redemption, much more may we hope to be saved by the power of His resurrection.'

“Speaking of his enfeebled state, and what he called the wandering of his thoughts, he remarked on the folly of delaying repentance to a sick bed, and expressed, as he had often done before, his desire to warn every one of the hopelessness of being able to settle on a dying bed so vast a concern as that of making one's peace with God. ‘If I had my work now all to do, what would become of me? If I had put off this matter to this time, it must have been entirely neglected.’

“He received the Holy Communion once while on his sick bed, and had appointed to receive it again a few days before his death. But when the time came, he was so much exhausted by the preparations which he had made, and which he would not omit, in order that he might come, as he expressed himself, ‘literally clean to the heavenly feast,’

that he was obliged to forego the opportunity.

“ ‘I am not in a condition,’ said he, ‘to partake discerningly, and I have no superstitious notions respecting the Eucharist. I do not regard it as a *viaticum*, necessary to the safety of the departing soul. I believe that, in my case, the *will* will be accepted for the *deed*; and tell my brethren [who were assembled in the next room to partake with him] that though I am denied the privilege of shouting the praises of redeeming love once more with them around the table of our common LORD, yet I will commune with them in spirit.’


“The evening before his death, I had left him for a few moments. Soon after, receiving intelligence that he was dying, I hastened to him, and found him nearly speechless, and sinking, to all appearance, very fast. I asked him if I should pray. ‘I cannot follow you,’ was his reply, uttered with great difficulty.

I then kneeled down by him, and prayed silently. After some moments he seemed to revive, and motioned to us to retire from his bed-side and leave him undisturbed. I sat and watched him from that time till he expired, which he did about one o'clock the following morning [March 5th, 1830], without having spoken for five or six hours. He appeared, however, to be in the entire possession of his mind to the last, and expired without a struggle."



Chapter Seventeenth.

BURIAL—MINUTE DIRECTIONS IN HIS WILL—LIBRARY FOR THE DIOCESE—WORKS FOR THE PRESS—PERSONAL APPEARANCE—MANNERS—SOLEMNITY IN CHURCH—REPORTS OF EYE-WITNESSES—ORDINARY COURTESIES OF LIFE—AN OFT-TOLD STORY SPOILED—LOVE TOWARDS GOD—SUCCESS IN THE MINISTRY—THE BEST KNOWLEDGE—AFFECTION FOR HIS CLERGY—THE WISE OLD MAN AT REST.

 HE remains of Bishop Ravenscroft were deposited in a vault beneath the chancel of Christ Church, Raleigh, and the following directions concerning his burial, as found in his will, were scrupulously observed.

“My will and desire is that the coffin to contain my mortal remains be of plain pine wood, stained black, and without ornament

of any kind; that my body be carried to the grave by my old horse Pleasant, led by my old servant Johnson; that the service for the burial of the dead, as set forth in the Book of Common Prayer, and none other, be used at my interment, with the 5th, 7th, 9th, 10th, and 11th verses of the 16th Psalm,* to be used instead of the hymn commonly sung; and that the Rev. George W. Freeman, Rector of Christ Church, Raleigh, do perform the said services.”

The Bishop bequeathed his valuable library to the diocese, to be preserved for the use of the clergy and laity of the Protestant Episcopal Church in North Carolina.

He also left to the “Episcopal Bible, Prayer Book, Tract, and Missionary Society” of the diocese, in which he had always felt a deep interest, the copyright of such of his writings as his friends might think it advis-

* Psalm 13th in our present Selections.

able to publish. Two large and handsome volumes were afterwards issued, in accordance with this permission.

In person Bishop Ravenscroft was large and commanding, and his manner, especially when engaged in any of the public offices of the ministry, was remarkably dignified, and so solemn and impressive as to inspire all who witnessed it with reverence. It was impossible not to partake of the consciousness which he ever seemed to feel when standing up at the altar of God.

The writer has often heard a friend speak of the deep impression made upon his mind, when he heard the Bishop recite the Ten Commandments in the Communion Service. Another relates that on a certain Confirmation occasion, a very large number of persons being present, when he gave out the beautiful hymn, "Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove," and began to read it, every one rose up, as if struck with some overpowering influence.

In his general intercourse with society, the Bishop was polite and courteous, although, when excited in debate, his loud tone of voice and warmth of manner conveyed the impression of a dictatorial spirit, with which he could not justly be accused.

His deep self-abasement on account of sin prompted him to speak of himself in terms so strong and forcible, as sometimes to mislead strangers, and do injury to himself.

The truth is, that he felt so grateful to God, for having called him to a knowledge of the truth, and permitted him to preach it to others, that he could think of no terms too glowing in which to magnify the Divine goodness towards him.

A story was very generally circulated through various parts of the country, during the Bishop's life, and is believed by many to this day, which contains not a word of truth. It runs thus: Before Mr. Ravenscroft abandoned the service of the world, and devoted

himself to God, he had severely chastised a servant one day for disobedience, and had ordered him to his cabin. He then secretly follows, and stops in a secluded position near by, in order to ascertain, if possible, the feelings which the offender would manifest.

To the master's unutterable surprise, he found him engaged in fervent prayer to God for himself, the passionate being whose lash had been so mercilessly applied; and he was so overcome by this pathetic appeal in his behalf, that he abandoned his former course of life, and became a sincere and devoted servant of the Lord.

It is almost a pity to spoil so good a story, but faithfulness as a biographer obliges me to do so. While Bishop Ravenscroft was in Kentucky, Dr. Chapman, of Lexington, inquired as to the truth of this narrative. He replied, that "when rumors of that description are current, if not altogether correct, there is usually to be found some incident,

actually occurring, to which their circulation might be traced. But, in this instance [he added], there was not the slightest foundation for the story. There was no such victim, no such prayer, and no such cause of conversion."

The most prominent feature in the Bishop's Christian character was love towards God, growing out of a profound sense of the mercy which had been extended to him, a poor erring sinner.

As a *minister of the gospel of Christ*, he was most diligent and zealous, and he lived to see many fruits of his labors.

Without having any great claims as a *scholar*, he was thoroughly conversant with the Holy Scriptures; and, certainly, a man of whom this could be truly said, he was, indeed, a workman who needed not to be ashamed.

As a *Bishop*, he was untiring in his devotion to the duties of his office, and North

Carolina can never forget the debt of obligation which she owes to him.

In his intercourse with his clergy, the Bishop was kind and affectionate. He regarded them as his *sons*, and they looked up to him as a loved and honored *father*. None but offenders against the laws of God and His Church had cause to fear him. In his presence all distinctions vanished, except that which his dignified person, his commanding talents, and his undoubted piety might justly claim for him.

And now, while taking our last look at this great and good man, laid low by death, it is with the feelings of one who gazes with admiration upon the matchless proportions of some mighty triumph of the sculptor's skill, thrown down from its pedestal by the rude hand of time, yet grand and beautiful in ruins.

“ The good old man is gone !
An Apostle's chair is void ;

There is dust on his mitre thrown,
And they've broken his pastoral rod ;
And the fold of his love he has left alone,
To account for its care to God.

“The wise old man is gone !
His honored head lies low,
And his thoughts of power are done,
And his voice's manly flow,
And the pen that, for truth, like a sword was drawn,
Is still and soulless now.

“The brave old man is gone !
With his armor on, he fell ;
Nor a groan nor a sigh was drawn,
When his spirit fled, to tell ;
For mortal sufferings, keen and long,
Had no power his heart to quell.”



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